

SENATOR WESELY: ...which leads to cracking in the highways, but the Roads Department hasn't moved very rapidly on that. I think there are innovations and efforts that could be undertaken that could be a little more wise use of some of these roads monies that would lead to the same sort of quality work and quantity of work and get more bang for the buck so to speak in our roads budget, but as long as we keep sending money over there without scrutiny, I think we're going to have the problems that we have. So I am saying that there are legitimate reasons to support this motion, difficult as it may be, and I'd ask your support for it.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Warner, please.

SENATOR WARNER: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, maybe we should go back. In the '50s and the '60s Nebraska was languishing in highway upkeep. It was a statewide recognized problem. So the Legislature established a special study committee that was involved in four years and essentially the framework that we have operated under since 1969 was a result of that study fully adopted by the Legislature. One thing I want to tell you is that in 1969 the end result for that study was that every road, highway, street in Nebraska, which at that time was 103,000 miles, now it's about 92 or 93,000, but every road was to be brought up to the appropriate standard for the traffic it carried in that 20 year period. In 1979 at the halfway mark, the public hearing on the Department of Roads budget I asked the then Director State Engineer how many years do we have left to complete that 1969 goal and he told me 20 years. No progress had been made. Why? Primarily inflation, primarily inflation of oil, not consumer price index. Everybody recalls what had happened particularly in the '70s, and the only growth that the road fund, both the cities and the county and the state, that had during that period of time was from the sales tax of the motor vehicle because everything else virtually stayed static. Now you can go back to that. Highways, as I've said before, there like a roof on a building. You can let it go and spend twice as much to fix it. Politically it is always safe to defer a highway, particularly for the executive branch of government because they'll be out of there by the time the deterioration becomes apparent to the citizen because a poor, bad policy decision was made not to keep up on those roads throughout the state. It's happened before and you have to sometimes fight to prevent deterioration, but it